

Steal This Hook!

Hooks for Evil Characters

By Robert Wiese



The hooks you normally read in this column assume that the adventurers are good-aligned, or at least good-intentioned, and that the resultant adventure will have them doing something heroic. But, there are those of you out there that like to play in, or run, campaigns where the PCs are evil. What should you do with them? *Steal This Hook* comes to the rescue this month, with hooks targeted for evil PCs. They are hooks that could have been targeted at good PCs, too, and you can in general twist any of the hooks in any "issue" of this column toward evil PCs if you want.

Author's Disclaimer: The author does not recommend playing evil PCs, nor does he condone evil behavior in real life or in the game.

"That Darn Familiar" -- *Eberron*

It has been known to happen at times, and it usually makes for lighthearted copy in the back pages of the *Sharn Inquisitive*: a wealthy maven dies, and instead of leaving her estate to friends, family, or public trusts, she chooses to will everything to a beloved pet.



Recently, it has happened again. Caroline Blackcatter, minor sorcerer and heiress to a family business manufacturing rare spell components, passed away at the venerable age of 92. According to executors, the entirety of her fortune went to her familiar, Mister Pipkins, including substantial funding set aside for the cat's care and protection.

While arousing smirks and smiles from *Sharn Inquisitive* readers, not everyone is so enamored with the story.

One of the provisions of the will is that if should anything befall Mister Pipkins, the fortune will pass on to Bartlemeus Burrlicher, chief executor of the estate. Naturally, Burrlicher cannot be associated with any attempt to do away with the cat . . . however, furtive associates of his approach the party, suggesting the cat's death would greatly benefit them all. Through the most transparent implications, they make it clear that Burrlicher needs a discreet, professional -- and unaffiliated -- party to break into the Blackcatter estate, where they must locate and assassinate Mister Pipkins. Once the Blackcatter fortune passes to Burrlicher, the party will be handsomely paid; in addition, should they stage their assassination attempt as a burglary, any objects they secure along the way are theirs to keep.

d100 Motivations

00-40 Burrlicher is what he says: a greedy man in need of one less cat, in order to gain possession of the fortune he has managed for years.

41-75 Burrlicher is still working for the estate; the fortune will not pass to him if the cat dies, but rather to a distant relative. Only if the cat lives long enough to die at a ripe old age of natural causes will Burrlicher be rewarded. Thus, he hires the party to test the estate's defenses and guards. He'll be waiting in the final study along with the cat -- and a heavy contingency of guards -- to reveal himself to the PCs and escort them out.

76-00 Caroline Blackcatter did not actually pass away. She has taken the guise of her cat to see which of her staff she can really trust, before completing her actual will. She'll reveal herself to the PCs when necessary and solicit the name of their employer. If things turn heated, she will certainly defend herself.

d100 Complications

00-60 The Blackcatter estate is by no means ill-defended. From topiary guardians in the gardens, to zealous bodyguards, to the cat itself -- well-protected by a nigh-impenetrable arsenal of defensive spells (this is truly a cat that could walk through walls) -- this is not an easy contract to fulfill.

61-90 Further protecting the cat, a number of local police have infiltrated the estate, posing as bodyguards. Due to the provisions of the will (if the provisions do indeed benefit Burrlicher), they've suspected Burrlicher would send assassins against the cat, which they've vowed to thwart.

91-00 The familiar, as it turns out, is no mere cat (if the third motivation above isn't used). Rather, it's a rakshasa that stays in the guise of a familiar in order to work incognito. The rakshasa has managed the estate for years, using Caroline Blackcatter for cover, and it composed her will itself. Needless to say, now that it has come directly into her fortune, it has no intention of seeing it taken away -- or its identity revealed.

"I Want One of Those" -- *Forgotten Realms*

Amn is an ancient land and home to a great many wizards. Each is trying to outdo his or her fellows in power or uniqueness of new items or any other measure that they can think of. In Murann, on the coast, one of the wizards has made a true advancement in the construction of golems. This wizard, Chayosa Tuwese, has created a golem with some real intelligence, and yet with the usual immunities to mental effects. She guards this secret closely and has created only a few of these new golems to guard her tower.





No matter how closely one guards a secret, someone else finds out. In this case, a rival mystic theurge has found out about the new golems. This man, Blaseus Eldmelm, knows that Chayosa has made something really powerful but he doesn't know the properties of the new creature. He'd like to, so he seeks out some suitable mercenaries/thieves/adventurers to break into Chayosa's tower and steal one of the golems, intact and functioning. In return for the golem, Blaseus is willing to offer access to magical training (spells and feats) that the PCs don't normally have access to. For those not of a magical bent, he can arrange through contacts for other kinds of training. He can also offer a map to a supposed treasure that he never got around to following up on when he was an adventurer.

d100 Motivations

00-30 Blaseus is sincere in what he says. He does not say what he wants to do with the golem, because it's not really the PCs' business anyway.

31-50 Blaseus is actually an employee of Chayosa, who wants someone to try to break into her house so she can see how well her new golems function. She plans to kill the intruding PCs.

51-75 Chayosa wants to fake her own death, and what better way than at the hands of mercenaries? She leaked the information about the golems, knowing Blaseus would find it irresistible.

76-00 Blaseus plans to kill the PCs rather than pay them, but he gives them enough real information to get them into trouble (and then enough false information that they cannot get out). The whole golem thing is a ruse; Blaseus has a lasting grudge against the PCs.

d100 Complications

00-40 Someone else has hired adventurers or thieves for the same purpose (stealing a golem), and the PCs encounter their rivals in the tower. The rivals are hostile to the PCs initially.

41-55 Chayosa is dead, slain by her new creations. Now they wander the tower at random, killing anything that moves.

56-75 Chayosa's new golems are created in such a way that the animating spirit comes from a human instead of an elemental or whatever. Thus, the golems have some intelligence and cunning, and yet they retain their mental immunities. The golems use weapons and tactics.

76-00 Blaseus has alerted the local law enforcement to the PCs' plans, in case they make it out alive. Law enforcement officers will be waiting for the PCs upon their departure.

Campaign Adaptation

This hook works in other campaigns where lots of wizards live. You might find [Complete Arcane](#) and/or [Complete Mage](#) useful for fleshing out wizards for the adventure. [Cityscape](#) could give you a good setting (if you need to make up a city for this), and [Dungeonscape](#) could help with the house that the PCs have to break into.

Eberron: Try this adventure in Atur, the City of Night, in Karrnath. Normally a focus of undead collection, the construct aspect could be a nice diversion from the drudgery of corpses.

Generic: Okay, absolutely anywhere works for this adventure. Even towers alone in the wilderness. All you need is a mage's tower, a mage (living or dead), and someone who knows about it.

Greyhawk: The wizards of the Great Kingdom would not only engage in this kind of research, but hire evil PCs regularly. Set it anywhere east of the Duchy of Urnst and you're golden.

Modern: For some irony, set this adventure in Ingolstadt, Germany, where Frankenstein created his monster.

"I had that around here somewhere . . ." -- Eberron

Arcanix, on the shores of Lake Galifar in Aundair, is a center for arcane studies that attracts dozens of apprentices each year and more than a few wizardly residents. Some live in the floating towers of the Arcane Congress, but many live in the village (on the ground) and try to benefit from being near the Arcane Congress. Because of this concentration of magical knowledge, and students thereof, rare magical happenings are not paid much attention to.

Yesterday, a wizard named Rasamiri Nyss, who has a reputation for absentmindedness, lent her *rod of wonder* to a fellow wizard named Lerat Den'dra, and thieves stole it from him. He did not mention the theft to Rasamiri, and she forgot that she loaned the rod out at all.

Last night, the people in the marketplace and tavern areas of Arcanix were treated to the most varied magical display they had ever seen. Swaths of grass covered stony areas, objects disappeared, people turned green, and an occasional lightning bolt ripped through the area wounding or killing some people. The PCs may have been out in the marketplace and witnessed some strange effect (use the *rod of wonder* table [DMG 237] to generate random effects). They could not find the source, however, even for projected effects like streams of butterflies. Some assumed that apprentices were playing games on each other, but others muttered about dark magic and doom coming upon everyone in the village.

Some of the wizards in the village, and even up at the Arcane Congress, have evil ambitions. One of these (you get to make up the name this time) contacts the PCs. He thinks that a [rod of wonder](#) is being used, and the only person in the village with one is Rasamiri. This wizard wants the rod for himself and Rasamiri dead, and he is willing to pay handsomely.

d100 Motivations

00-35 The patron wizard is sincere, and he is not holding back anything.

36-70 The patron wizard hopes the PCs will be killed on the mission (and another lackey of his would collect the rod), but he is otherwise sincere and not planning any direct harm to the PCs.

71-90 The patron wizard has hired some assassins to take out the PCs as soon as they have the rod and right after their battle with Rasamiri.

91-00 Rasamiri leads a double life and is the patron wizard in disguise. If the PCs agree to take her job, then she knows they are evil and will slay them when they try to slay her. She will be well prepared when they arrive to attack her.

d100 Complications

00-40 A group of thieves has the *rod of wonder* and was testing it out last night. They discovered its unfortunate as well as beneficial

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for transporting this adventure into other campaign worlds. *Complete Mage* could be useful for NPC wizards and [Complete Scoundrel](#) for NPC thieves.

Forgotten Realms: This is a good Waterdeep adventure. There are a lot of wizards there.

Generic: A city with an absentminded wizard is all you need, plus whatever setting you envision for the adventure itself. Additional wizards as competitors are nice, but they could be replaced with other kinds of competitors.

Greyhawk: The world of Greyhawk is so much like a generic campaign in many ways that it could go just about anywhere. The author suggests Hardby, where actions against a female wizard may be more difficult, especially for male PCs.

Modern: Magic items such as *rods of wonder* don't exist in the modern world unless they are brought from some other

effects (after turning a favorite tavern ethereal). They now plan to use it to cover up their robberies and don't want to part with it.

world or plane. Better skip this one for your **d20 Modern** campaign.

41-50 The *rod of wonder* has a side effect that makes its wielder invisible whenever it is carried with the intent to use it. That is why no one could trace the source of the effects last night. That and the fact that the wielder was moving all the time. Thus, the rod hides itself by hiding its wielder.

51-65 The *rod of wonder* has a side-effect curse attached to it. The wielder becomes progressively more evil and more paranoid with each use. The thief wielding it has been twisted quite a bit after last night's tests. The paranoia leads to more protections against the rod being stolen, making the PCs' job harder.

66-80 The *rod of wonder* has a curse attached to it. If it is stolen and the thief attempts to use it, the rod works normally but a random monster is summoned from the *summon monster I-VII* spell tables. The rod attacks the wielder unless the wielder is invisible, in which case it seeks out random targets. Last night's tests were accompanied by a lot of summoned monster attacks.

81-00 Other parties are interested in the rod. Rasamiri is the only known owner of such an item in the whole area, and any wizard that figures out the origin of the effects knows it is hers. Some want it out of her (or anyone's) hands, while others just want it for themselves. These parties either try to steal the rod from the PCs (or hire someone to do so), or try to negotiate with the PCs to get the rod. Somehow everyone knows that the PCs are on the job (divination magic is amazing, isn't it?).

"Mirror, mirror on the wall . . ." -- *Forgotten Realms*

Westgate, home of the Night Masks, is a city known for thieves and scoundrels. The Night Masks used to hold uncontested sway over the city's illegal activities, but with the death of the Faceless, smaller guilds have cropped up from time to time. These guilds are pursued relentlessly by local heroes and law enforcement, because they are easier to remove than the Night Masks (which survive under different leadership).

Then reports filter through the taverns that the heroic paladin Zalah Mystof, who was known for tracking and arresting thieves, has begun killing them off instead. They are just rumors, but the killings become more frequent and witnesses say they saw Zalah in the area or even witnessed him slaughtering thieves that had surrendered.

Needless to say, the smaller guilds that are the target of Zalah's zeal are very nervous, and they look for mercenaries to kill the paladin as quickly as possible. The PCs could be hired by several different guilds and collect money for the same job from all these patrons -- if they can find and kill the paladin.

d100 Motivations

00-00 No tricky motivations here; everyone wants the paladin Zalah dead as soon as possible.

d100 Complications

Campaign Adaptation

Complete Scoundrel is your friend for this hook, since thieves abound. You might also find [Complete Champion](#) useful, but you have to wait until May for it. Westgate is published in **Forgotten Realms** products, or you can use *Cityscape* to place the adventure in another city.

Eberron: Sharn is an obvious choice for this adventure. Perhaps too obvious. Fairhaven in Aundair is a good alternate choice. You could even set it in Stormreach (on Xen'drik).

Generic: A city with some thieves' guilds is what you need. Easy, huh?

00-50 The Zalah that is killing the thieves is an evil duplicate of the real Zalah, who was slain by the duplicate. Zalah ran into a *mirror of opposition* trap when pursuing a group of thieves, and the mirror's duplicate slew him. Then it began slaying thieves, because it is still Zalah (just evil).

51-60 Zalah is under the mental control of the new leader of the Night Masks, and he is being used to clear out the smaller gangs permanently. Should the PCs break the mental control, they can get Zalah to lead them back to at least some members of the Night Masks.

61-85 The evil Zalah has created himself a lair in the sewers under Westgate (all cities in the Realms with great thieves' guilds have sewers). He has not placed any guardian creatures himself, but some nasty water-dwelling monsters have moved in.

86-00 Zalah is not evil at all; he slew the evil duplicate because it was deadlier than himself. He gave up arresting thieves because it did no good. Now he is adamant about killing thieves.

Greyhawk: Set this in Greyhawk City itself. Other cities will work just fine, but the Free City has a lot of different thief elements you can work in to complicate matters (including racial issues with Rhenee thieves).

Modern: A city with some thieves' guilds . . . oh, yeah. See above. In the modern world these are crime cartels or mafias or something like that. Try New York City.

About the Author

Robert Wiese has been playing **D&D** since 1978 after he watched a game played in the car on the way home from a Boy Scouts meeting. He was fascinated, and delved into this strange world of dragons and magic and sourcebooks. Years later, he was hired to edit tournaments for the **RPGA** Network, and from there progressed to running the network after his boss was assassinated in the great Christmas purge of 1996. Times were tough, but he persevered and brought the **RPGA** into a shining new era. Eventually he met a girl who liked to play **D&D** too, and he left Renton for the warmth and casinos of Reno, Nevada. Now, he works in the Pharmacology department of UNR studying mouse foot muscles and the effects of RF emissions on same. He spends as much time as possible with his wife Rhonda and year-old son Owen.

Over the course of his career, he wrote over sixty tournament adventures for the **RPGA** , and he continues to inflict his creativity on you through this website. He hopes that you find his little creations useful, or at least amusing.

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